bited together; and ſometimes there is ſuch a confuſion of acceptations, that diſcernment is wearied, and diſtinction puzzled, and perſeverance herſelf hurries to an end, by crouding together what ſhe cannot ſeparate.

Theſe complaints of difficulty will, by thoſe that have never conſidered words beyond their popular uſe, be thought only the jargon of a man willing to magnify his labours, and procure veneration to his ſtudies by involution and obſcurity. But every art is obſcure to thoſe that have not learned it: this uncertainty of terms, and commixture of ideas, is well known to thoſe who have joined philoſophy with grammar; and if I have not expreſſed them very clearly, it muſt be remembered that I am ſpeaking of that which words are inſufficient to explain.

The original ſenſe of words is often driven out of uſe by their metaphorical acceptations, yet muſt be inſerted for the ſake of a regular origination. Thus I know not whether *ardour* is uſed for *material heat*, or whether *flagrant*, in *Engliſh*, ever ſignifies the ſame with *burning*; yet ſuch are the primitive ideas of theſe words, which are therefore ſet firſt, though without examples, that the figurative ſenſes may be commodiouſly deduced.

Such is the exuberance of ſignification which many words have obtained, that it was ſcarcely poſſible to collect all their ſenſes; ſometimes the meaning of derivatives muſt be ſought in the mother term, and ſometimes deficient explanations of the primitive may be ſupplied in the train of derivation. In any caſe of doubt or difficulty, it will be always proper to examine all the words of the ſame race; for ſome words are ſlightly paſſed over to avoid repetition, ſome admitted eaſier and clearer explanation than others, and all will be better underſtood, as they are conſidered in greater variety of ſtructures and relations.

All the interpretations of words are not written with the ſame ſkill, or the ſame happineſs: things equally eaſy in themſelves, are not all equally eaſy to any ſingle mind. Every writer of a long work commits errours, where there appears neither ambiguity to miſlead, nor obſcurity to confound him; and in a ſearch like this, many felicities of expreſſion will be caſually overlooked, many convenient parallels will be forgotten, and many particulars will admit improvement from a mind utterly unequal to the whole performance.

But many ſeeming faults are to be imputed rather to the nature of the undertaking, than the negligence of the performer. Thus ſome explanations are unavoidably reciprocal or circular, as *hind, the female of the ſtag*; *ſtag, the male of the hind*: ſometimes eaſier words are changed into harder, as *burial* into *ſepulture* or *interment*, *drier* into *deſiccative*, *dryneſs* into *ſiccity* or *aridity*, *fit* into *paroxyſm*; for the eaſieſt word, whatever it be, can never be tranſlated into one more eaſy. But eaſineſs and difficulty are merely relative, and if the preſent prevalence of our language ſhould invite foreigners to this dictionary, many will be aſſiſted by thoſe words which now ſeem only to increaſe or produce obſcurity. For this reaſon I have endeavoured frequently to join a *Teutonick* and *Roman* interpretation, as to CHEER to *gladden*, or *exhilarate*, that every learner of *Engliſh* may be aſſiſted by his own tongue.

The ſolution of all difficulties, and the ſupply of all defects, muſt be ſought in the examples, ſubjoined to the various ſenſes of each word, and ranged according to the time of their authours.

When firſt I collected theſe authorities, I was deſirous that every quotation ſhould be uſeful to ſome other end than the illuſtration of a word; I therefore extracted from philoſophers principles of ſcience; from hiſtorians remarkable facts; from chymiſts complete proceſſes; from divines ſtriking exhortations; and from poets beautiful deſcriptions. Such is deſign, while it is yet at a diſtance from execution. When the time called upon me to range this accumulation of elegance and wiſdom into an alphabetical ſeries, I ſoon diſcovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the ſtudent, and was forced to depart from my ſcheme of including all that was pleaſing or uſeful in *Engliſh* literature, and reduce my tranſcripts very often to cluſters of words, in which ſcarcely any meaning is retained; thus to the wearineſs of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of expunging. Some paſſages I have yet ſpared, which may relieve the labour of verbal ſearches, and interſperſe with verdure and flowers the duſty deſarts of barren philology.

The examples, thus mutilated, are no longer to be conſidered as conveying the ſentiments or doctrine of their authours; the word for the ſake of which they are inſerted, with all its appendant clauſes, has been carefully preſerved; but it may ſometimes happen, by haſty detruncation, that the general tendency of the ſentence may be changed: the divine may deſert his tenets, or the philoſopher his ſyſtem.

Some of the examples have been taken from writers who were never mentioned as maſters of elegance or models of ſtile; but words muſt be ſought where they are uſed; and in what pages, eminent for purity, can terms of manufacture or agriculture be found? Many quotations ſerve no other purpoſe, than that of proving the bare exiſtence of words, and are therefore ſelected with leſs ſcrupulouſneſs than thoſe which are to teach their ſtructures and relations.

My purpoſe was to admit no teſtimony of living authours, that I might not be miſled by partiality, and that none of my cotemporaries might have reaſon to complain; nor have I departed from this reſolution, but when ſome performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory ſupplied me, from late books, with an example that was wanting, or when my heart, in the tenderneſs of friendſhip, ſolicited admiſſion for a favourite name.

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have ſtudiouſly endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the reſtoration, whoſe works I regard as *the wells of Engliſh undefiled*, as the pure ſources of genuine diction. Our language, for almoſt a century, has, by the concurrence of many cauſes, been gradually departing from its original *Teutonick* character, and deviating towards a *Gallick* ſtructure and phraſeology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of ſtile, admitting among the additions of later times, only ſuch as may ſupply real deficiencies, ſuch as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate eaſily with our native idioms.

But as every language has a time of rudeneſs antecedent to perfection, as well as of falſe refinement and declenſion, I have been cautious leſt my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and croud my book with words now no longer underſtood. I have fixed *Sidney*'s work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excurſions. From the authours which roſe in the time of *Elizabeth*, a ſpeech might be formed adequate to all the purpoſes of uſe and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from *Hooker* and the tranſlation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from *Bacon*; the phraſes of policy, war, and navigation from *Raleigh*; the dialect of poetry and fiction from *Spenſer* and *Sidney*; and the diction of common life from *Shakeſpeare*, few ideas would be loſt to mankind, for want of *Engliſh* words, in which they might be expreſſed.

It is not ſufficient that a word is found, unleſs it be ſo combined as that its meaning is apparently determined by the tract and tenour of the ſentence; ſuch paſſages I have therefore choſen, and when it happened that any authour gave a definition of a term, or ſuch an explanation as is equivalent to a definition, I have placed his authority as a ſupplement to my own, without regard to the chronological order, that is otherwiſe obſerved.

Some words, indeed, ſtand unſupported by any authority, but they are commonly derivative nouns or adverbs, formed from their primitives by regular and conſtant analogy, or names of things ſeldom occurring in books, or words of which I have reaſon to doubt the exiſtence.

There is more danger of cenſure from the multiplicity than paucity of examples; authorities will ſometimes ſeem to have been accumulated without neceſſity or uſe, and perhaps ſome will be found, which might, without loſs, have been omitted. But a work of this kind is not haſtily to be charged with ſuperfluities: thoſe quotations which to careleſs or unſkilful peruſers appear only to repeat the ſame ſenſe, will often exhibit, to a more accurate examiner, diverſities of ſignification, or, at leaſt, afford different ſhades of the ſame meaning: one will ſhew the word applied to perſons, another to things; one will expreſs an ill, another a good, and a third a neutral ſenſe; one will prove the expreſſion genuine from an ancient authour; another will ſhew it elegant from a modern: a doubtful authority is corroborated by another of more credit; an ambiguous ſentence is aſcertained by a paſſage clear and determinate; the word, how often ſoever repeated, appears with new aſſociates and in different combinations, and every quotation contributes ſomething to the ſtability or enlargement of the language.

When words are uſed equivocally, I receive them in either ſenſe; when they are metaphorical, I adopt them in their primitive acceptation.

I have ſometimes, though rarely, yielded to the temptation of exhibiting a genealogy of ſentiments, by ſhewing how one authour copied the thoughts and diction of another: ſuch quotations are indeed little more than repetitions, which might juſtly be cenſured, did they not gratify the mind, by affording a kind of intellectual hiſtory.

The various ſyntactical ſtructures occurring in the examples have been carefully noted; the licence or negligence with which many words have been hitherto uſed, has made our ſtile capricious and indeterminate; when the different combinations of the ſame word are exhibited together, the preference is readily given to propriety, and I have often endeavoured to direct the choice.

Thus have I laboured to ſettle the orthography, diſplay the analogy, regulate the ſtructures, and aſcertain the ſignification of *Engliſh* words, to perform all the parts of a faithful lexicographer: but I have not always executed my own ſcheme, or ſatisfied my own expectations. The work, whatever proofs of diligence and attention it may exhibit, is yet capable of many improvements: the orthography which I recommend is ſtill controvertible, the etymology which I adopt is uncertain, and perhaps frequently erroneous; the explanations are ſometimes too much contracted, and ſometimes too much diffuſed, the ſignifications are diſtinguiſhed rather with ſubtilty than ſkill, and the attention is harraſſed with unneceſſary minuteneſs.

The examples are too often injudiciouſly truncated, and perhaps ſometimes, I hope very rarely, alleged in a miſtaken ſenſe; for in making this collection I truſted more to memory, than, in a ſtate of diſquiet and embarraſſment, memory can contain, and purpoſed to ſupply at the review what was left incomplete in the firſt tranſcription.

Many terms appropriated to particular occupations, though neceſſary and ſignificant, are undoubtedly omitted; and of the words moſt ſtudiouſly conſidered and exemplified, many ſenſes have eſcaped obſervation.

Yet theſe failures, however frequent, may admit extenuation and apology. To have attempted much is always laudable, even when the enterprize is above the ſtrength that undertakes it: To reſt

below

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